

2026-2027 WELCOME NEWSLETTER

A welcome to the new academic year from the AHSS Research Facilitation & Strategic Initiatives Team



Dr Anna Cieslik
School Research Facilitation
Lead (UK)



Dr Elizabeth Penner
School Research Facilitation
Lead (EU/International)



Dr Andrea Salter
Research Strategy Manager and REF
Lead for SAH and SHSS



Dr Allison Ksiazkiewicz
Research Support Administrator

We provide support with planning & writing grant proposals

For researchers putting forward a funding application who have the support of their department:

AHSS-srf-administrator@admin.cam.ac.uk

We support AHSS strategic research initiatives

We work closely to enable School research priorities, strategy groups and research committees to support strategy and research culture initiatives.

AHSSResearchStrategy@admin.cam.ac.uk

We support REF 2029 administrative preparations

We lead REF administration for 17 Units of Assessment across the two Schools, covering over 1200 researchers in over 23 institutions.

AHSS-REF2029@admin.cam.ac.uk

HSS Mapping Tool for Networks and Research Collaborations

New: Login Portal

The Login Portal is now live making it easier to access the map! Bookmark the Portal for your quick reference.

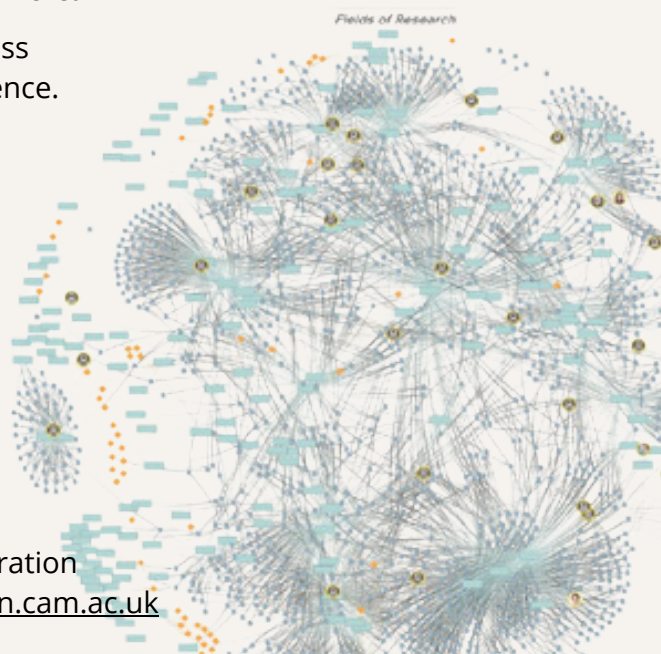
Login to the Portal Here >>

Register your Profile here >>
(first time users)

New features include:

- new 'Research Interests in Focus' that networks connections based on your research interests

To book an in-department information or demonstration session, please email ahss-srf-administrator@admin.cam.ac.uk



Introducing: SHSS Deputy Head of School (Research)



Professor Jude Browne (POLIS)

Beginning on 1 October 2026, Prof. Jude Browne (POLIS) steps into the new role of Deputy Head of School for Research. The role is intended to deputise as appropriate and undertake a range of other duties to support the work of the School. Prof. Browne will be supporting research activities and strategy specifically, and will be representing the School at a range of University-level committees as part of the role

SAH Deputy Head of School (Research)

Prof. Marcus Waithe (English) has been serving as Deputy Head of School for Research since October 2025. In this capacity, he supports research activities and strategy, and chairs the new School Research Committee. At the University level he sits on the General Board, the REF Strategy Group, the GB Collections Committee and the Research Culture Steering Committee.

After leading last year's review of the School's Strategic Research Strands and Research Strategy, Prof. Waithe will spend this year implementing the report findings.

Another major project is entitled 'Time and Space for Research', which responds to widespread concerns about the availability of research time across our academic community. He encourages colleagues who care about this issue to



Professor Marcus Waithe (English)

complete the '**Time and Space for Research**' survey, which has now been extended to **23 October 2026**.

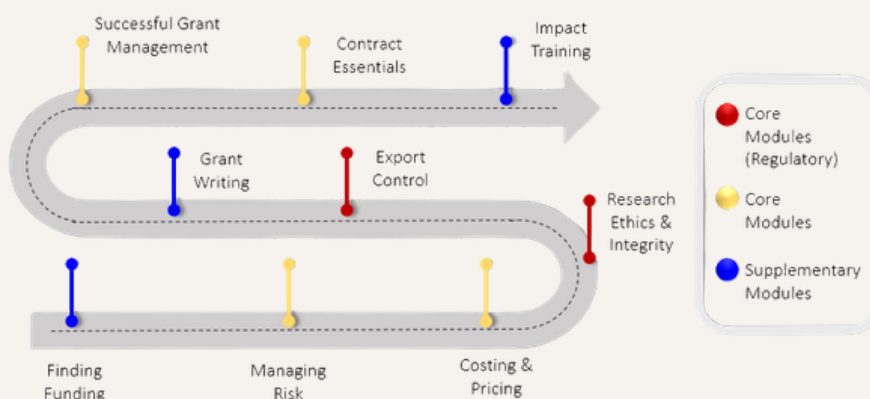
The first initiative under this heading promotes diary time for research by creating Outlook Calendar-integrated desk slots in a designated University Library study space (more details to follow).

Principal Investigator Programme

To help PIs navigate the responsibilities of managing a grant or contracted research

[Access PI Programme](#) >>>

This set of topical modules provides essential background information, tools and tips that will help PIs to understand and implement successful grant management in order to meet University and Funder requirements.



This will help you to advance your research ideas and your projects being well supported and in line with legal, ethical, financial and other regulatory frameworks. The modules are presented in an easily digestible format using real case studies to highlight responsibilities, good practice and available support locally and centrally.

This programme is hosted by the [Research Operations Office](#).

Further PI training resources can be found [here](#).

UKRI Funding Updates



Economic
and Social
Research Council



Arts and
Humanities
Research Council

The AHRC and ESRC have recently held townhall meetings for the academic community. In their webinar on 30 October the ESRC CEO Stian Westlake declared that the Council intends to support a wider range of research projects and reward more risk-taking in their [responsive-mode schemes](#). The four key changes announced were:

- More outcome focused approach
- Strategic curation of their applicant-led portfolio
- Greater support for novelty, disruption and responsible risk taking
- Faster, more effective funding and assessment process

The AHRC townhall on 2 October announced the launch of their [Impact Toolkit](#) and [Commercialisation Strategy](#). Jaideep Gupte, the AHRC Director of Research, Strategy and Innovation, emphasised the importance of providing Arts and Humanities Researchers with easily accessible, practical guidance. The event focused on how Universities can strengthen partnership development and build stronger innovation ecosystems. When asked about the role of impact in grants assessment, Christopher Smith, the AHRC Executive Chair, advised that advancing knowledge is still the fundamental goal of funded research projects and impact activities are expected to be proportionate to the level of funding.

Celebrating Successes

List of Active Grants

The AHSS Research Facilitation Leads have compiled a list of active grants held by researchers based in the School of Arts and Humanities and School of the Humanities and Social Sciences. If an award has been overlooked, please do get in touch at ahss-srf-administrator@admin.cam.ac.uk to remedy this.



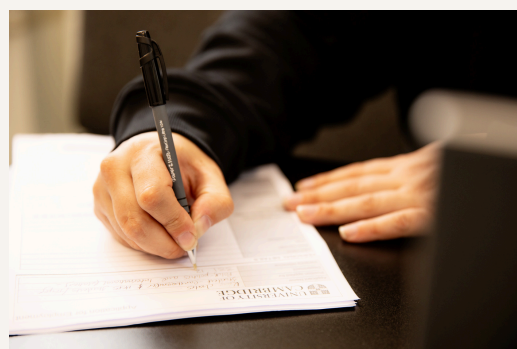
[View list of awards](#) >>

–Time and Space for Research Survey (SAH)–

Extended Deadline: 23 October 2026

Many colleagues report concerns about the availability of *research time**, both in and out of term. You are encouraged to shape the research culture of the School and your institution by completing **this survey**, which sets this question within the wider field of research support.

* N.B. across this survey, the word 'research' applies inclusively, and should be taken to encompass 'scholarship' as defined by the University's 'Teaching and Scholarship' career pathway.



[Complete Survey here](#) >>

AHSS Impact Hub

Connecting expertise, accelerating impact

Supported by University HEIF funding, the AHSS Impact Hub is taking shape. Work is underway to provide joined-up Impact and Knowledge Exchange support across all 23 AHSS institutions, supporting projects by individual researchers and strategic initiatives at department level, including cross-cutting initiatives and College-based researchers. The Hub will create a stronger, more connected approach to AHSS research impact across Cambridge.

A central pillar of the Hub is a strengthened approach to impact funding through the AHRC Impact Acceleration Account, chaired by Prof Laura Wright (English), and the Social Science Impact Fund, chaired by Prof Gordon Harold (Education).

For project funding queries, contact [Dr Lucy Sheerman](#) (arts and humanities) and [Dr Tina Basi](#) (social sciences) for more information.

—AHSS Website Update and Survey—

The AHSS Research Funding and Strategic Initiatives website has a new look! Please do have a visit, if you haven't already. Updated features include:

- Listing of Currently Active Grants
- Research Mapping Tool Login Portal
- Revised Funding and Resources section
- further pages dedicated to Research Environment
- **upcoming** new section dedicated to Early Career Researcher funding and support

Let us know what you think of the updated website.

Take this 3-minute questionnaire.

3-Minute Questionnaire



Visit the website: <https://www.ahssresearch.group.cam.ac.uk/>

—Research Pathways in Practice—

A paid placement programme for BA Early Career Research Network members

Apply to experience research-adjacent roles at the University of Cambridge and partner organisations.

This programme recognises and explores the changing nature of research careers, aiming to provide first-hand experience through paid training and development opportunities that may open new routes for researchers and enhance their future employment prospects.

Deadline: October 23 2026 (23:59)

Placements period: January – March 2027

Conclusion and reports – April 2027

Fitzwilliam Museum: Record Enhancing Project

Cambridge Enterprise: SHAPE Ideas Incubator

Centre for Science and Policy (CSaP): Department for Transport Stakeholder Engagement

School of Humanities and Social Sciences: Research Communications at the Communications Department

Further Details and Role Descriptions



For more details, please contact Elmira Kakabayeva, BA ECRN East of England Project Coordinator, at ba-ecrnadmin@crashh.cam.ac.uk

Visit the BA Early Career Research Network Opportunities website.



Image © Judith Weik

Research Excellence Framework 2029

Sustaining & Celebrating Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences Research

REF is a major, cyclical exercise, assessing research quality across all higher education institutions in the UK. It evaluates three core areas: Strategy, People and Research Environment [SPRE] (20%), Contribution to Knowledge and Understanding [CKU] (55%), and Engagement and Impact [E&I] (25%).

REF's overarching goal is to provide accountability for public investment, benchmark research quality, and inform the distribution of around £2 billion in annual public funding.

Why care about REF?

- ***Sustaining research in your discipline:*** REF has real importance for Cambridge, with Quality-related Research (QR) Funding forming a major pillar of our financial ecosystem (e.g. contributing to staff salaries, resources, infrastructure and services). In addition, REF underpins strategic funding for research, feeds into external reputation (e.g. through league tables), which affect our ability to attract students and researchers.

The outcome of REF2029 is expected to inform University funding for nearly a decade.

- ***Space for ambitious scholarship:*** REF assesses outputs collectively rather than through individual publication quotas, supporting different forms and timescales of research, including substantial monographs and longer-term projects. REF2029 celebrates diverse or 'Non-Traditional Outputs' - don't forget to record *all* your publications in your [Elements](#) profile!
- ***Recognising research impact beyond academia:*** REF values the contribution research makes to culture, society, policy and public life, from exhibitions and heritage to policy engagement and public debate - please make sure your Department is aware of your contributions.
- ***Strengthening our research environment:*** REF recognises the wider conditions that enable excellent research, including research culture, career development, infrastructure and the people who support researchers.

REF is academic-led, data-driven and collaborative

REF success depends on **academic engagement**, requiring all researchers to keep records of their publications in [Elements](#) up to date, publish [Open Access](#) where appropriate, and engage in nominating and reviewing outputs if requested. It relies on AHSS departments and faculties developing and evidencing strong research, environment and impact strategies.

AHSS submits to [17 Units of Assessment \(UoA\)](#) (disciplinary clusters), many of which cross-cut our own department and faculty boundaries and involve College researchers. Curating our submissions is an exciting opportunity for reflection as well as a huge data-driven administrative exercise!

Success fundamentally relies on **expert academic leadership and insight** to shape submissions: [UoA Chairs](#) drive overall submissions, Impact Leads steer impact case study and strategy development, and many other substantial responsibilities are shared across each wider UoA Committee (from leading on outputs (CKU) or environment (SPRE) to taking on the role of Research Culture and Environment (people) lead). Several AHSS researchers are also contributing to [REF at a national level](#). We are hugely grateful for colleagues' investment in this important exercise.

With final **submission expected in November 2028**, preparations across AHSS are now well underway. Final Guidance will be published by Research England in mid-November 2026 and the University's first internal deadline is 30 November 2026.

Research Excellence Framework 2029

Sustaining & Celebrating Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences Research

Dedicated AHSS REF administrative support

The University and Schools have invested in direct, hands-on administrative support to help UoAs, departments and individual researchers navigate the process, reducing administrative burden to strengthen disciplinary submissions.

Allocated across UoAs and already working closely with UoA Chairs on all components of each submission, the AHSS REF Administration team supports UoA committees, implements policies in line with the University's Code of Practice, works on background procedures and data, and supports coordination to inform strategic, academic decision-making.

Please reach out to **AHSS-REF2029@admin.cam.ac.uk** with queries. We are very happy to help!



AHSS REF Administration Team [Miyoung Kim; Andrea Salter; Lucy Shaw; Flavia Fiorillo; Ann Luo; Katie Xu]

About the AHSS REF Administration Team

Dr Andrea Salter (REF Lead and Research Strategy Manager): *With over a decade in AHSS and a background as a social science researcher, I led the REF 2021 AHSS administration team and worked in the national REF secretariat for REF 2021. My focus for REF 2029 is on making REF as manageable and beneficial as possible: improving outcomes, reducing burden, celebrating research, and harnessing REF activity and evidence to strengthen research culture and strategy.*

Lucy Shaw (Senior REF UoA Administrator): *I am delighted to be using my experience as a team manager and skills in data analytics to bring value to team planning, reporting and collaboration.*

Miyoung Kim (UoA Administrator): *Drawing on my experience as a Research Grants Coordinator in MMLL and the analytical skills I'm developing through a Data Apprenticeship, I'm enjoying gaining a wider view of AHSS research and supporting REF planning and decision-making.*

Dr Flavia Fiorillo (UoA Administrator): *Having worked as a researcher in Cambridge for several years, REF wasn't entirely new to me. Although trained as a scientist, working with historians and art historians gave me an appreciation of different UoA perspectives. I'm glad to now work across AHSS and discover the breadth of its research and cultures.*

Dr Ann Luo (REF Support Administrator): *My PhD in Film Studies gave me experience of academic research and scholarly publishing. I now support Arts and Humanities UoAs in preparing for REF 2029, with a particular focus on CKU and research output data.*

Kate Xu (REF Support Administrator): *With an MPhil in Education, I bring experience of academic research and an understanding of the research environment. In my current role, I work closely with Social Sciences UoAs, supporting researchers with Elements, Open Access and research outputs as part of their preparations for REF 2029.*

For specific **REF Impact queries**, please direct to AHSS REF Impact Coordinators:

Dr Ben Earley and **Tamsin Varney**.

Develop Inclusive Teams

Emotional Culture Deck

A pool of facilitators have been trained to deliver Emotional Culture Deck (ECD) workshops and coaching, strengthening leadership, cohesion and team environments across research groups.

What is the Emotional Culture Deck?

A card-based framework created to help identify the emotional drivers that shape effective, psychologically safe and high-performing environments. Whether you are collaborating with others, leading teams, managing change or building relationships, emotions play a powerful role in our behaviour, decision-making and performance at work.

Benefits to Research Culture

- individuals to build self-awareness, empathy and resilience
- leaders and teams to co-create and develop their desired team culture
- improved communication, trust and collaboration
- building capacity for stronger, compassionate and effective leadership
- simple, scalable tools adaptable to different groups
- interactive workshops tailored for the research community and can be themed around particular topics

Learning & Organisational Development

Discover how the Emotional Culture Deck can support your research group or department. Register your interest for a taster session or workshop by scanning the QR code.

For inquiries, please reach out to: LOD@admin.cam.ac.uk



Building Effective Teams

Lego Serious Play

Why engage this workshop?

- clarify your teams' shared identity
- understand individual and collective contributions
- strengthen collaboration
- surface hidden assumptions and perspectives
- leave with practical, personal actions

A highly interactive workshop that gives teams dedicated time to reflect on how they work together.

Using the creative LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® method, participants build and share models that reveal values, assumptions and perspectives that often stay hidden in academic environments.



For inquiries, please reach out to: LOD@admin.cam.ac.uk

Register your teams interest by scanning the QR code

Gathering Stories

School of Arts and Humanities Research Communications

Have a story or news item you'd like to share with others? Send your notices to [Sarah Pratt](#), [SAH Communications Manager](#) to include in the weekly Arts and Humanities News Round-up.